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Lieutenant Governor



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# Annual Department of Transitional Assistance Organizational Report

January 4, 2014

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance



**REPORT ON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATION AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES  
DECEMBER 2015**

**MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE**

The mission of the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is to assist low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, increase their incomes, and improve their quality of life. DTA offers a comprehensive system of programs and supports to help individuals and families achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, including food and nutritional assistance, cash assistance, and employment supports.

DTA serves one out of every nine people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, elders, and people with disabilities.

**Description of the Report**

Chapter 18 Section 10 requires the DTA to file a report containing a description of the organization of the department and a review of the work of the agency.

**Programs Administered**

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

While administered by DTA, SNAP benefits are 100% federally funded and regulated. The Commonwealth is responsible for 50% of the costs to administer the program. SNAP benefits help families supplement their food budgets to afford nutritious food. Residents of the Commonwealth who participate in SNAP are families with children, elders, and persons with disabilities. Nearly 50% of SNAP recipients are working people.

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC)

TAFDC is a state and federally-funded program that provides cash assistance to families with children, and pregnant women, with little or no assets or income. TAFDC is operated under the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. Participants receive child care and transportation support associated with job assistance, and can access a number of supportive referrals. As a part of TAFDC, participants may be required to perform a work-related activity as a condition of eligibility.

Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC)

EAEDC is a state-funded program, which provides cash assistance to certain elderly and disabled persons, and children. Those eligible for EAEDC include people over 65 who are waiting for Supplemental Security Income payments to begin, and individuals unable to work due to a physical or mental incapacity, or an individual who is participating in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission program.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and State Supplemental Payments (SSP)

The SSI program is a federal program that provides cash assistance to the elderly, disabled, and blind. Massachusetts provides optional state-funded payments designed to supplement these funds. DTA funds SSP payments for elderly, disabled, and blind recipients. Currently, the University of Massachusetts Medical School administers SSP payments for DTA.

### **Department of Transitional Assistance Staffing**

DTA employs civil servants across the state in the areas of programs, policy, and management. DTA's staff has a range of responsibilities from legal, policy development, fair hearings, and benefit eligibility.

With a modernization of business practices, DTA is able to more evenly distribute the workload to SNAP staff. The current model was implemented with the understanding that enabling a client to reach the first available worker would have a significant impact on improving efficiency.

DTA's SNAP workforce has increased recently, reaching a peak of 569 SNAP caseworkers in June 2015. Though that number decreased with the Massachusetts Early Retirement Incentive Program, and promotions in the wake of staff departures, DTA currently employs 507 SNAP caseworkers, 76 SNAP Supervisors, and 22 Acting SNAP Supervisors.

DTA staff serving those receiving TAFDC and EAEDC is currently 428. Of the 428, 310 are caseworkers and 118 are supervisors.

### **Organization of the Department of Transitional Assistance**

DTA is organized into 22 local Transitional Assistance Offices (TAOs), and a Central Office. TAOs are responsible for providing direct services to clients and those seeking assistance across the Commonwealth. Central Office houses the Office of the Commissioner, senior management, Program Integrity, and other administrative units. Over the course of 2015, the Baker-Polito Administration has made strategic adjustments to DTA's organization including restructuring DTA's senior leadership, expanding the Office of the Ombudsman to respond to questions from a wide-variety of stakeholders, and taking innovative steps such as transforming a local TAO in Springfield into a full-time processing center to meet demand.

Attachment A to this report provides an organizational chart of DTA's Central Office as well as the 22 local offices.